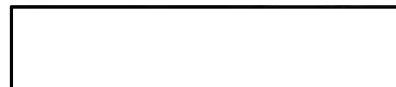


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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
17 June 1966

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

On the political scene, minor clashes occurred in Hue between pro-"struggle" forces and government troops. In the military field, allied forces made no major contact today with the Viet Cong.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Viet Cong terrorists attack allied soldiers in Cholon, the Chinese quarter of Saigon (Paras. 1-2).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Several minor clashes between loyal and rebel forces were reported in Hue as progovernment troops pressed their campaign to restore order (Paras. 1-3). Tri Quang, still continuing his fast, appealed to Buddhists to cease virtually all cooperation with the government (Para. 4). A Buddhist girl unsuccessfully attempted self-immolation at the Buddhist Institute (Para. 5). Tam Chau warned Buddhists that Buddhism might come to an end if the struggle against the Ky government fails (Para. 7). The Buddhist Institute called for a nationwide strike to start on 18 June (Para. 8).

III. The Military Situation in North Vietnam:
SA-2 missile firings reached a new high on 15 June, but no US planes were lost (Para. 1). Effectiveness of the North Vietnamese SAM system is low compared to other air defense measures, but it has forced US aircraft to fly within range of conventional AAA fire (Paras. 2-4).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.



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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. No major contact has been reported in any of the 25 battalion-sized or larger allied/Vietnamese search-and-destroy operations currently in progress.

Viet Cong Activity

2. A Viet Cong terrorist early today threw two grenades at a group of allied soldiers waiting at a bus stop near a US enlisted men's billet in Cholon, the Chinese section of Saigon. Eight US and two ROK personnel were wounded by the resulting explosions. At approximately the same time, a bomb attached to a parked vehicle exploded about 100 feet from the bus stop, wounding three South Vietnamese personnel. No Viet Cong suspects have thus far been apprehended.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

The Situation in Hue

1. The two battalions of progovernment paratroopers and 650 combat police, reinforced on 17 June by a battalion of Vietnamese Marines and more armored personnel carriers, appeared to be increasing their hold over most of the city. Support elements of the ARVN 1st Division and Buddhist "struggle" elements, however, have shown no signs of capitulating to the superior government force which now totals approximately 2,000 government soldiers and policemen. Many of the dissidents were reported to be flocking into the "citadel," the old walled imperial sector of the city and headquarters for the 1st Division which reportedly has been cordoned off and is guarded by loyal tank forces.

2. General Nhuan, the 1st Division commander, has called on the soldiers under his command to disassociate themselves from antigovernment resistance. Three 1st Division battalions in Quang Tri Province, supposedly on an operation, as well as one battalion and support elements in Hue numbering possibly 1,000 men, however, are not following Nhuan's orders.

3. Several skirmishes were reported on 17 June as the progovernment forces repeatedly broke up small groups of demonstrators throughout the city and some gunfire was exchanged near Tri Quang's pagoda. There were no reports of casualties on the 17th, although at least one pro-"struggle" soldier was killed on the 16th. There is no confirmation of a press report of a skirmish on the 17th near the Phu Bai Air Base in which several progovernment soldiers were said to have been killed while removing altars from the road.

4. An appeal from Tri Quang for Buddhist soldiers to lay down their arms and for all Buddhists to sever relations with Americans was broadcast on 17 June over the Hue "Voice of Buddhist

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Salvation." He said he will continue his hunger strike and called for a general strike and a continuation of nonviolent opposition to the Ky regime. The state of Tri Quang's health is the subject of conflicting reports, but apparently his condition is not yet critical.

Demonstrations Continue in Saigon

5. On the evening of 17 June, a Buddhist girl tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide on the grounds of the Buddhist Institute by igniting her gasoline-soaked clothing. The fire went out, however, before she was killed and she remains in critical condition, according to a press account.

6. Riot police on 17 June dispersed small unruly crowds of demonstrators who burned three or four automobiles and again piled debris in the streets, according to press reports. No casualties were reported.

Appeal from Tam Chau

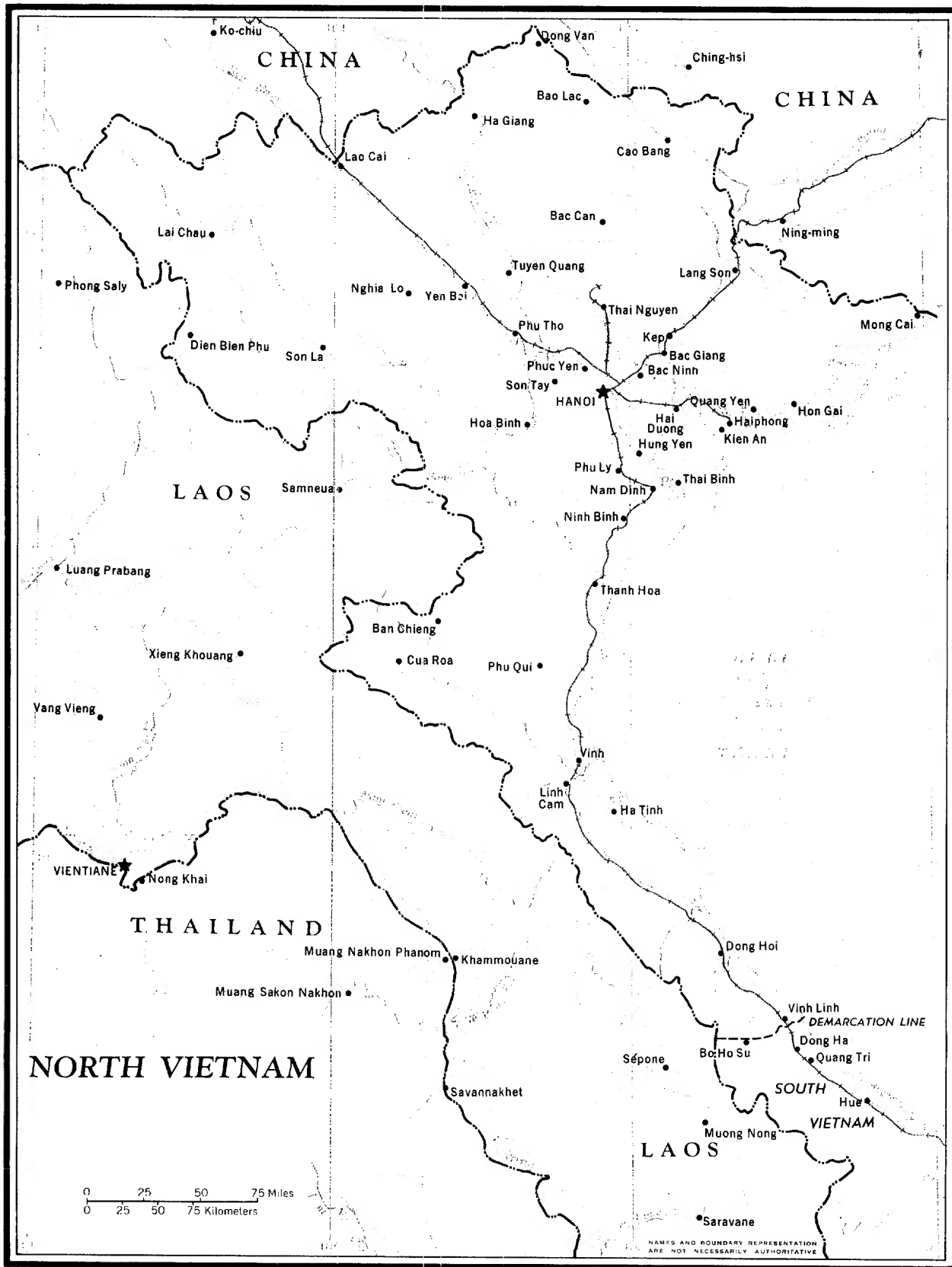
7. The progovernment Vietnamese press in Saigon carried an appeal from Thich Tam Chau warning Buddhists that the failure of antigovernment opposition could mean the end of organized Buddhism in Vietnam. He reportedly deplored the use of altars in the streets and denounced the use of violence. The appeal was critical of Tri Quang for ordering tactical measures which amounted to a "sacrilegious exhibition" of Buddhist icons. Tam Chau apparently remains in a resort city near Saigon.

General Strike Planned by Buddhists

8. Buddhist Institute leaders have called for a three-day nationwide general strike to begin on 18 June, according to the press. Tri Quang issued a similar appeal over the clandestine Buddhist radio in Hue.

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III. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Preliminary field reports indicate North Vietnamese air defense units fired 15 surface-to-air missiles at US aircraft on 15 June without effect. This number of firings could be the highest level of SA-2 activity to date. No US aircraft have been lost to SA-2 missiles since 24 April, though 54 missiles are known to have been fired since that date.

2. Since the commencement of US air operations over North Vietnam, 252 US planes have been lost in combat. Of these only 14 confirmed and four possible losses are attributed to SA-2 missiles--about seven percent of the combat-associated losses.

3. Several factors may have combined to produce this low proportion. A substantial reduction in the effectiveness of the SAM system was apparent after the Soviets passed control to the North Vietnamese [redacted]. The frequent movement of the estimated 20-25 SAM units between the 111 identified sites may have reduced the effectiveness of the missile equipment. US electronic countermeasures and attacks on the sites with radar-homing missiles and conventional air-to-ground fire undoubtedly have had some effect. Certainly the introduction of US airborne warning systems and the development of evasive maneuvers by US pilots have played a large part in reducing the kill potential of the SA-2 system.

4. The principal advantage to the Communists of the SAM defenses in North Vietnam has been to force US aircraft down to altitudes where antiaircraft artillery fire becomes effective. Communist successes with these conventional weapons--215 US aircraft downed to date--would not have been so great without the presence of the Soviet-supplied missiles.

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